

§ 1.403(b)-5 Nondiscrimination rules.

(a) *Nondiscrimination rules for contributions other than section 403(b) elective deferrals*—(1) *General rule.* Under section 403(b)(12)(A)(i), employer contributions and after-tax employee contributions to a section 403(b) plan must satisfy all of the following requirements (the nondiscrimination requirements) in the same manner as a qualified plan under section 401(a):

(i) Section 401(a)(4) (relating to nondiscrimination in contributions and benefits), taking section 401(a)(5) into account.

(ii) Section 401(a)(17) (limiting the amount of compensation that can be taken into account).

(iii) Section 401(m) (relating to matching and after-tax employee contributions).

(iv) Section 410(b) (relating to minimum coverage).

(2) *Nonapplication to section 403(b) elective deferrals.* The requirements of this paragraph (a) do not apply to section 403(b) elective deferrals.

(3) *Compensation for testing.* Except as may otherwise be specifically permitted under the provisions referenced in paragraph (a)(1) of this section, compliance with those provisions is tested using compensation as defined in section 414(s) (and without regard to section 415(c)(3)(E)). In addition, for purposes of paragraph (a)(1) of this section, there may be excluded employees who are permitted to be excluded under paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(D) and (E) of this section. However, as provided in paragraph (b)(4)(i) of this section, the exclusion of any employee listed in paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(D) or (E) of this section is subject to the conditions applicable under section 410(b)(4).

(4) *Employer aggregation rules.* See regulations under section 414(b), (c), (m), and (o) for rules treating entities as a single employer for purposes of the nondiscrimination requirements.

(5) *Special rules for governmental plans.* Paragraphs (a)(1)(i), (iii), and (iv) of this section do not apply to a governmental plan as defined in section 414(d) (but contributions to a governmental plan must comply with paragraphs (a)(1)(ii) and (b) of this section).

(b) *Universal availability required for section 403(b) elective deferrals*—(1) *Gen-*

eral rule. Under section 403(b)(12)(A)(ii), all employees of the eligible employer must be permitted to have section 403(b) elective deferrals contributed on their behalf if any employee of the eligible employer may elect to have the organization make section 403(b) elective deferrals. Further, the employee's right to make elective deferrals also includes the right to designate section 403(b) elective deferrals as designated Roth contributions.

(2) *Effective opportunity required.* For purposes of paragraph (b)(1) of this section, an employee is not treated as being permitted to have section 403(b) elective deferrals contributed on the employee's behalf unless the employee is provided an effective opportunity that satisfies the requirements of this paragraph (b)(2). Whether an employee has an effective opportunity is determined based on all the relevant facts and circumstances, including notice of the availability of the election, the period of time during which an election may be made, and any other conditions on elections. A section 403(b) plan satisfies the effective opportunity requirement of this paragraph (b)(2) only if, at least once during each plan year, the plan provides an employee with an effective opportunity to make (or change) a cash or deferred election (as defined at § 1.401(k)-1(a)(3)) between cash or a contribution to the plan. Further, an effective opportunity includes the right to have section 403(b) elective deferrals made on his or her behalf up to the lesser of the applicable limits in § 1.403(b)-4(c) (including any permissible catch-up elective deferrals under § 1.403(b)-4(c)(2) and (3)) or the applicable limits under the contract with the largest limitation, and applies to part-time employees as well as full-time employees. An effective opportunity is not considered to exist if there are any other rights or benefits (other than rights or benefits listed in § 1.401(k)-1(e)(6)(i)(A), (B), or (D)) that are conditioned (directly or indirectly) upon a participant making or failing to make a cash or deferred election with respect to a contribution to a section 403(b) contract.

(3) *Special rules.* (i) In the case of a section 403(b) plan that covers the employees of more than one section

501(c)(3) organization, the universal availability requirement of this paragraph (b) applies separately to each common law entity (that is, applies separately to each section 501(c)(3) organization). In the case of a section 403(b) plan that covers the employees of more than one State entity, this requirement applies separately to each entity that is not part of a common payroll. An eligible employer may condition the employee's right to have section 403(b) elective deferrals made on his or her behalf on the employee electing a section 403(b) elective deferral of more than \$200 for a year.

(ii) For purposes of this paragraph (b)(3), an employer that historically has treated one or more of its various geographically distinct units as separate for employee benefit purposes may treat each unit as a separate organization if the unit is operated independently on a day-to-day basis. Units are not geographically distinct if such units are located within the same Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA).

(4) *Exclusions*—(i) *Exclusions for special types of employees.* A plan does not fail to satisfy the universal availability requirement of this paragraph (b) merely because it excludes one or more of the types of employees listed in paragraph (b)(4)(ii) of this section. However, the exclusion of any employee listed in paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(D) or (E) of this section is subject to the conditions applicable under section 410(b)(4). Thus, if any employee listed in paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(D) of this section has the right to have section 403(b) elective deferrals made on his or her behalf, then no employee listed in that paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(D) of this section may be excluded under this paragraph (b)(4) and, if any employee listed in paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(E) of this section has the right to have section 403(b) elective deferrals made on his or her behalf, then no employee listed in that paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(E) of this section may be excluded under this paragraph (b)(4).

(ii) *List of special types of excludible employees.* The following types of employees are listed in this paragraph (b)(4)(ii):

(A) Employees who are eligible under another section 403(b) plan, or a section 457(b) eligible governmental plan, of the employer which permits an amount to be contributed or deferred at the election of the employee.

(B) Employees who are eligible to make a cash or deferred election (as defined at § 1.401(k)-1(a)(3)) under a section 401(k) plan of the employer.

(C) Employees who are non-resident aliens described in section 410(b)(3)(C).

(D) Subject to the conditions applicable under section 410(b)(4) (including section 410(b)(4)(B) permitting separate testing for employees not meeting minimum age and service requirements), employees who are students performing services described in section 3121(b)(10).

(E) Subject to the conditions applicable under section 410(b)(4), employees who normally work fewer than 20 hours per week (or such lower number of hours per week as may be set forth in the plan).

(iii) *Special rules.* (A) A section 403(b) plan is permitted to take into account coverage under another plan, as permitted in paragraphs (b)(4)(ii)(A) and (B) of this section, only if the rights to make elective deferrals with respect to that coverage would satisfy paragraphs (b)(2) and (4)(i) of this section if that coverage were provided under the section 403(b) plan.

(B) For purposes of paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(E) of this section, an employee normally works fewer than 20 hours per week if and only if—

(1) For the 12-month period beginning on the date the employee's employment commenced, the employer reasonably expects the employee to work fewer than 1,000 hours of service (as defined in section 410(a)(3)(C)) in such period; and

(2) For each plan year ending after the close of the 12-month period beginning on the date the employee's employment commenced (or, if the plan so provides, each subsequent 12-month period), the employee worked fewer than 1,000 hours of service in the preceding 12-month period. (See, however, section 202(a)(1) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) (88 Stat. 829) Public Law 93-406, and regulations under section 410(a) of the Internal Revenue Code applicable with

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respect to plans that are subject to Title I of ERISA.)

(c) *Plan required.* Contributions to an annuity contract do not satisfy the requirements of this section unless the contributions are made pursuant to a plan, as defined in § 1.403(b)-3(b)(3), and the terms of the plan satisfy this section.

(d) *Church plans exception.* This section does not apply to a section 403(b) contract purchased by a church (as defined in § 1.403(b)-2).

(e) *Other rules.* This section only reflects requirements of the Internal Revenue Code applicable for purposes of section 403(b) and does not include other requirements. Specifically, this section does not reflect the requirements of ERISA that may apply with respect to section 403(b) arrangements, such as the vesting requirements at 29 U.S.C. 1053.

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§ 1.403(b)-6 Timing of distributions and benefits.

(a) *Distributions generally.* This section provides special rules regarding the timing of distributions from, and the benefits that may be provided under, a section 403(b) contract, including limitations on when early distributions can be made (in paragraphs (b) through (d) of this section), required minimum distributions (in paragraph (e) of this section), and special rules relating to loans (in paragraph (f) of this section) and incidental benefits (in paragraph (g) of this section).

(b) *Distributions from contracts other than custodial accounts or amounts attributable to section 403(b) elective deferrals.* Except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section relating to distributions from custodial accounts, paragraph (d) of this section relating to distributions attributable to section 403(b) elective deferrals, § 1.403(b)-4(f) (relating to correction of excess deferrals), or § 1.403(b)-10(a) (relating to plan termination), a section 403(b) contract is permitted to distribute retirement benefits to the participant no earlier than upon the earlier of the participant's severance from employment or upon the prior occurrence of some event, such as after a fixed number of years, the attainment of a stated age, or dis-

ability. See § 1.401-1(b)(1)(ii) for additional guidance. This paragraph (b) does not apply to after-tax employee contributions or earnings thereon.

(c) *Distributions from custodial accounts that are not attributable to section 403(b) elective deferrals.* Except as provided in § 1.403(b)-4(f) (relating to correction of excess deferrals) or § 1.403(b)-10(a) (relating to plan termination), distributions from a custodial account, as defined in § 1.403(b)-8(d)(2), may not be paid to a participant before the participant has a severance from employment, dies, becomes disabled (within the meaning of section 72(m)(7)), or attains age 59½. Any amounts transferred out of a custodial account to an annuity contract or retirement income account, including earnings thereon, continue to be subject to this paragraph (c). This paragraph (c) does not apply to distributions that are attributable to section 403(b) elective deferrals.

(d) *Distribution of section 403(b) elective deferrals—(1) Limitation on distributions—(i) General rule.* Except as provided in § 1.403(b)-4(f) (relating to correction of excess deferrals) or § 1.403(b)-10(a) (relating to plan termination), distributions of amounts attributable to section 403(b) elective deferrals may not be paid to a participant earlier than the earliest of the date on which the participant has a severance from employment, dies, has a hardship, becomes disabled (within the meaning of section 72(m)(7)), or attains age 59½.

(ii) *Special rule for pre-1989 section 403(b) elective deferrals.* For special rules relating to amounts held as of the close of the taxable year beginning before January 1, 1989 (which does not apply to earnings thereon), see section 1123(e)(3) of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (100 Stat. 2085, 2475) Public Law 99-514, and section 1011A(c)(11) of the Technical and Miscellaneous Revenue Act of 1988 (102 Stat. 3342, 3476) Public Law 100-647.

(2) *Hardship rules.* A hardship distribution under this paragraph (d) has the same meaning as a distribution on account of hardship under § 1.401(k)-1(d)(3) and is subject to the rules and restrictions set forth in § 1.401(k)-1(d)(3) (including limiting the amount of a distribution in the case of hardship to